

J/STT 6

# STUDIA TROICA

Band 6 · 1996



VERLAG PHILIPP VON ZABERN · MAINZ AM RHEIN

# A HIEROGLYPHIC SEAL FROM TROIA

*J. David Hawkins and Donald F. Easton<sup>1</sup>*

## ABSTRACT

A biconvex bronze seal found in 1995 carries the first assured pre-classical inscription from Troia. It is written in the Anatolian hieroglyphic script, generally used by the Hittites on their seals and on their monumental inscriptions – the latter usually in the Luwian language. Side 1 gives the incomplete name of a scribe, side 2 gives the incomplete name of a woman, presumably his wife. Its archaeological context was the western end of Blegen's House 761, dating to Troia VIIb. Whether the precise context should be termed VIIb<sub>1</sub> or VIIb<sub>2</sub> raises a question of definition. Caskey would have called it VIIb<sub>1</sub>; but there are characteristics which invite a dating to VIIb<sub>2</sub>.

## ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Ein 1995 gefundenes, bikonvexes Bronzesiegel trägt die erste gesicherte prähistorische Inschrift von Troia. Es ist in anatolischer Hieroglyphenschrift beschrieben – normalerweise von den Hethitern auf ihren Siegeln und monumentalen Inschriften benutzt, letztere gewöhnlich in luwischer Sprache. Seite 1 trägt den unvollständigen Namen eines Schreibers, Seite 2 den unvollständigen Namen einer Frau, vielleicht seiner eigenen. Den archäologischen Kontext bildet das Westende des Blegen-Hauses 761, datiert nach Troia VIIb. Ob der genaue Zusammenhang als VIIb<sub>1</sub> oder VIIb<sub>2</sub> bezeichnet werden sollte, ist eine Definitionsfrage. Caskey hätte ihn VIIb<sub>1</sub> genannt; aber es gibt einige Charakteristika, die eine Datierung in VIIb<sub>2</sub> nahelegen.

During the excavations of 1995 an inscribed bronze seal was found among deposits of Troia VIIb (Figs. 1–2). The find is of importance in being the first assured pre-classical inscription from the site. Each face exhibits an outer ring of decorative markings perhaps intended to suggest cuneiform script, and, within a circle, a central field containing signs in the Hittite hieroglyphic script. The bronze is surprisingly little corroded, and was successfully cleaned by Miss Margrit Reuss; but the two surfaces are badly worn so that few of the incised signs in the central fields are legible.

## The Reading

The seal Troia E9.573 is of a common "Hittite" type termed "biconvex" or "lentoid." It is un-

usual only in being made of metal instead of the usual stone. Within that genre it is also quite usual in having a man's name on one side and a woman's, presumably the wife's, name on the other. Gorny in a recent study on such seals concludes that they are characteristic of the Hittite Empire Period and were most popular in the Thirteenth Century B.C., with only limited survival beyond that date.<sup>2</sup>

Side 1 – man's side: BONUS<sub>2</sub> SCRIBA x-x-nu BONUS<sub>2</sub> (Fig. 1). The seal is completely usual in flanking the name with BONUS<sub>2</sub> signs, wishing "good" to the seal owner, and also giving his profession, "scribe," which here is not repeated on the other side as it so often is on other seals. Unsurprisingly perhaps, "scribe" is by far the most common professional designation and indeed often accompanies another or several titles.

The name: this is written apparently by three signs

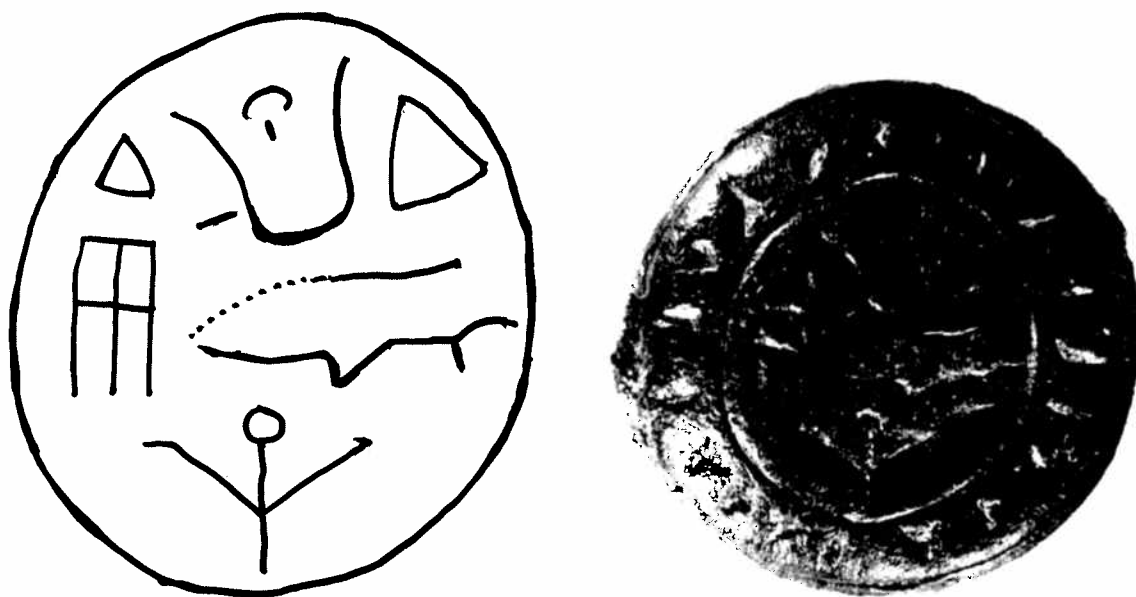


Fig. 1 Seal E9.573, Side 1. Scale 3 : 1. Neg. Troia 95/94-35.

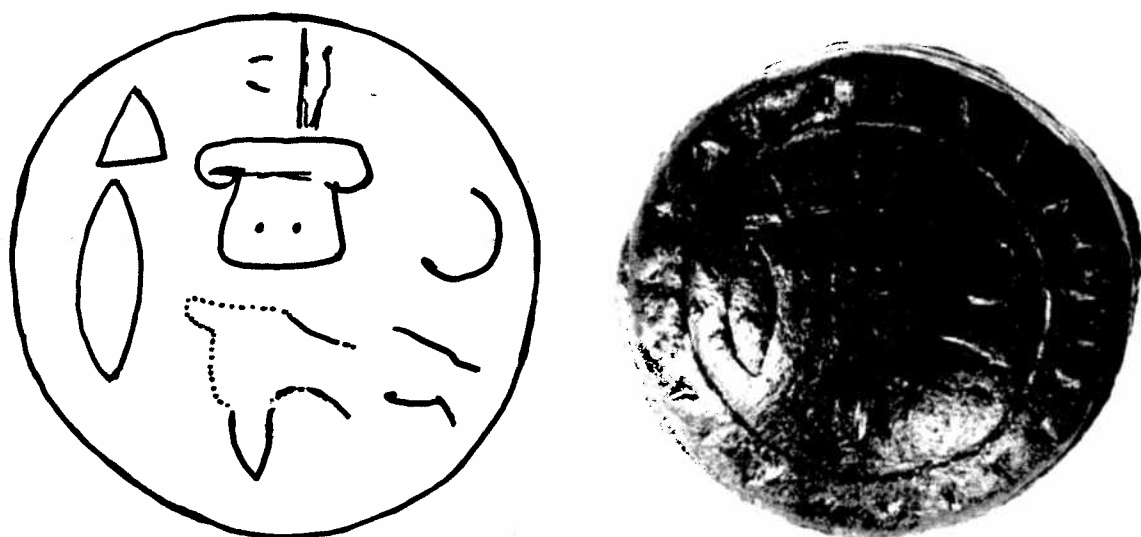


Fig. 2 Seal E9.573: Side 2. Scale 3 : 1. Neg. Troia 95/94-28.

of which only the last, nu, can be certainly identified. The first two could possibly be  $\text{sũ}^{??} + \text{ra/i}^{?}$ - $\text{tā}^{?}$  -, if they could be reconstructed as indicated by dotted lines on the drawing. But it must be admitted that microscopic examination detects none of the postulated traces.

Side 2 – woman's side:  $\text{BONUS}_2$ .  $\text{FEMINA}$  ( $x^?$ )

$\text{pa-xxx}$  (Fig. 2). The “good” and “woman” signs are of common occurrence, often paired on seals with a man's name on the other side, sometimes on their own showing that women might use seals independently from men. Here the signs opposite “good. woman” are not a repeat but not positively identifiable. They may be a further

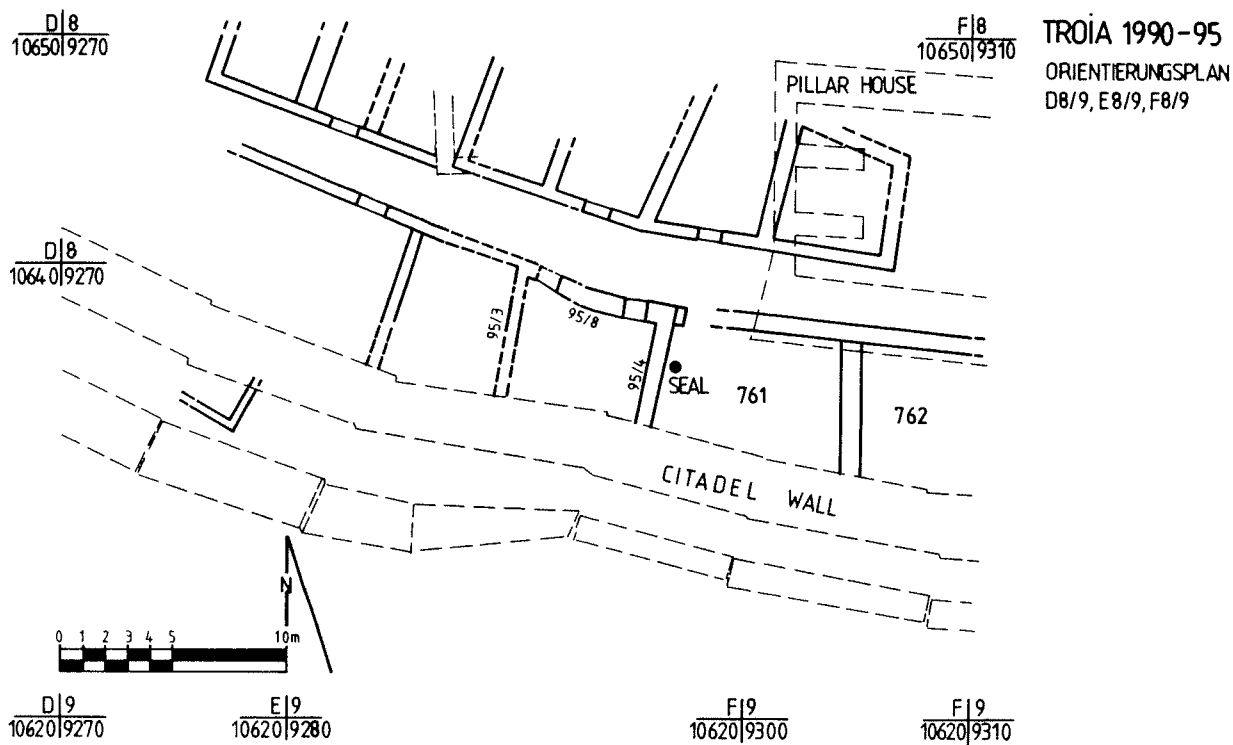


Fig. 3 Orientation Plan, Quadrats DEF8/9.

title or qualification, or possibly part of the name. The name: the pa- is quite clear, but there are possible traces of a sign before so it may not be initial. After it, it is unclear, whether one or more signs: the traces suggest tá as suggested in the dotted reconstruction, but again microscopic examination does not offer any support.

## The Archaeological Context

The seal was found at the eastern edge of quadrat E9.<sup>3</sup> The area being dug was the southernmost part of an unexcavated “pinnacle” left untouched by previous expeditions.<sup>4</sup> Excavation of the pinnacle began in 1994. The pinnacle projects southwards into E9 where it measures approximately 10 × 5 m. This area is bounded on the north side by a continuation of the Late Bronze Age street found by Dörpfeld to the West in DE8<sup>5</sup> and by Blegen to the East in EFG8<sup>6</sup>. To the South it is bounded almost immediately by the Troia VI–VII citadel wall. To the East lies the Pillar House and its overlying buildings of Troia VII (Fig. 3).

The spot where the seal was found lies in the western end of Caskey's House 761 (Fig. 4).<sup>7</sup> Like other buildings in the area, House 761 is one room deep. It was already known that its south wall was probably formed by the Troia VI-VII citadel wall and that its north wall borders the street. Excavation in the pinnacle has now revealed the western half of a possible doorway giving northwards onto the street, and the west wall of the building (Wall 95/4). Beyond the west wall is another, similar room of the same date. Caskey removed all the VII deposits immediately to the East of the pinnacle. In House 761 Caskey identified a floor at 33.20 m., but thought that most of the overlying 1.70 m. of deposits were rubbish thrown into the building once it had fallen into disuse.<sup>8</sup> He assigned the entire stratum, up to c. 34.90 m., to Troia VIIb.<sup>9</sup> So the seal, which was found at 34.46 m., would on Caskey's view have come from strata of rubbish deposited during VIIb, in a disused house. But the new excavations suggest some qualifications both as to the nature of the deposit and as to its date.

The new excavations have not yet gone below

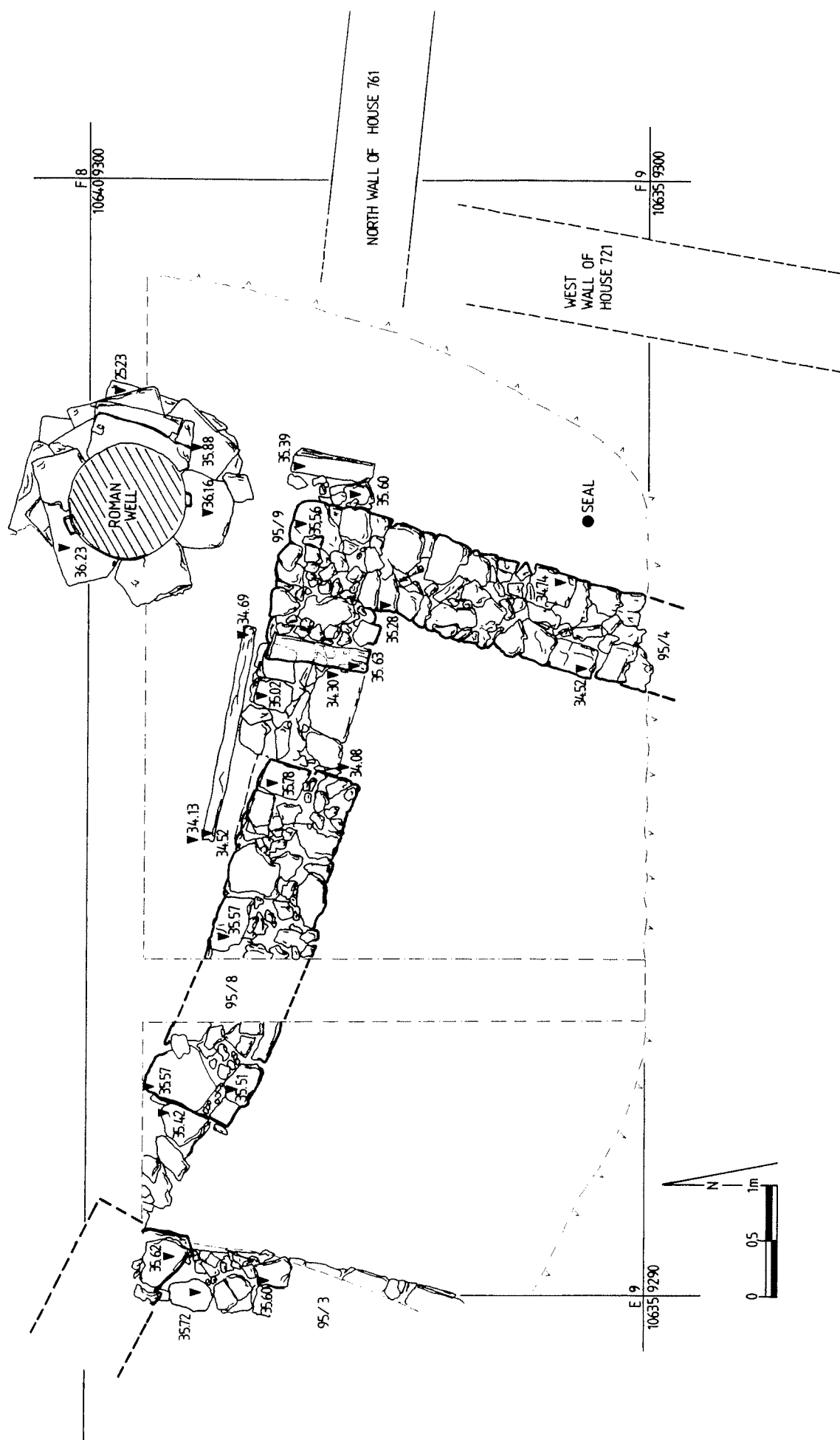


Fig. 4 Buildings of Troia VIIIb<sub>1-2</sub> in Quadrat E9.

34.10 m., although deeper deposits are visible in the east and south scarps of the pinnacle. It certainly looks as though deposits below c. 34.26 m. may be largely rubbish. There is a thick stratum of ash and cockle-shells visible in the profile below c. 34.10 m., and, above it, powdery grey earth with much broken pottery, charcoal and unusual quantities of shells and animal-bones. But above that there were traces of three possible surfaces: at c. 34.28–34.41 m., where sherds, bones and occasional pieces of white clay seemed trodden into the ground; at c. 34.55 m., where there were traces of a possible plaster floor; and at c. 34.80 m. where a few flat stones associated with fragments of lime plaster again looked like remnants of a floor; this floor appeared to be contemporary with some flat stones set vertically against the face of Wall 95/4. The seal came from slightly above the lowest of these surfaces.

For dating by external synchronisms the immediate context of the seal has produced only a Mycenaean krater and an amphoriskos.<sup>10</sup> The krater (Fig. 5)<sup>11</sup> shows an unusual decorative scheme on the Troian shape C75, very characteristic of VIIb, and is probably a local product. The amphoriskos (Fig. 6)<sup>12</sup> was found in two pieces, one found in 1994 and the other in the following year. The upper part, found in 1994, has been provisionally dated by Dr. Penelope Mountjoy to LH IIIC Early and so should not be out of place in VIIb.<sup>13</sup>

On internal grounds the VIIb<sub>1</sub> date has its attractions. In the immediate context within House 761 Grey Minyan and Coarse Wares are present in more or less equal quantities, a situation more characteristic of VIIb<sub>1</sub> than of VIIb<sub>2</sub>. Coarse Wares tend to be polished and of a brown to grey-black fabric; the later, highly-polished black fabric is not so common. Tan Ware forms less than 10% of the repertoire. There are a possible seven pieces of Barbarian Ware (Fig. 7),<sup>14</sup> characteristic of Blegen's Troia VIIb.<sup>15</sup> The vertical stones associated with the topmost surface at 34.80 m. were themselves associated with Buckelkeramik and so probably of VIIb<sub>2</sub> date.

The contemporary deposits within the room just to the West have a similar repertoire: between c. 34.10 m. and 34.67 m. there is a series of floors with Barbarian Ware again being present. The

overlying deposits should be of a later date than VIIb<sub>1</sub>. A rebuilding at c. 34.67 m. introduced significant quantities of Buckelkeramik, a defining feature of Blegen's Troia VIIb<sub>2</sub>.<sup>16</sup> Then, after the destruction of this phase, a final Bronze Age building-phase introduced a terrace and two new walls. These were associated with Buckelkeramik and a "Circled Ware" which is thought to be an Anatolian version of Protogeometric. This phase, also recognized in Z7(North) and Z7(South), is being called VIIb<sub>3</sub>.<sup>17</sup>

But, against the VIIb<sub>1</sub> date, the immediate context of the seal in House 761 produced three pieces of Buckelkeramik (Fig. 8)<sup>18</sup>, and Buckelkeramik was also present in small quantities in the contemporary strata of the room to the West. Moreover in this phase the west wall of the western room (Wall 95/3) already shows the use of orthostats which, like Buckelkeramik, were regarded by Blegen as a defining characteristic of his VIIb<sub>2</sub>.<sup>19</sup> (Fig. 9). And Barbarian ware, although supposedly characteristic of VIIb<sub>1</sub>, continues in use in overlying strata in both areas.

So while stratigraphically the context in which the seal was found is certainly the continuation of one which Blegen assigned to VIIb<sub>1</sub>, there is a question whether this phase should not properly be included within VIIb<sub>2</sub>. It seems that we must choose between jettisoning Blegen's division and the criteria on which that division was made.

Blegen's criteria for distinguishing VIIb<sub>2</sub> are not in fact as watertight as one might suppose. It never occurred to Dörpfeld, a keen observer of architecture, that orthostats belonged only to a late phase of his VII<sub>2</sub>. They in fact defined the beginning of his VII<sub>2</sub> as a whole,<sup>20</sup> and it was this VII<sub>2</sub> which Blegen renamed as VIIb and subdivided into VIIb<sub>1</sub> and VIIb<sub>2</sub>.<sup>21</sup> Blegen does at least allow the theoretical possibility that orthostats might occur earlier than VIIb<sub>2</sub>.<sup>22</sup> Moreover he did find occasional pieces of Buckelkeramik in his VIIb<sub>1</sub>, some indeed in House 761.<sup>23</sup> So it may be that the criteria are already half-jettisoned. But this is to discuss terminology rather than dating.

At all events we can say that the seal was found in the western end of House 761, in a stratum which had accumulated over a rough, trodden surface; and that it was deposited late in a phase which Blegen called VIIb<sub>1</sub> but which, depending on

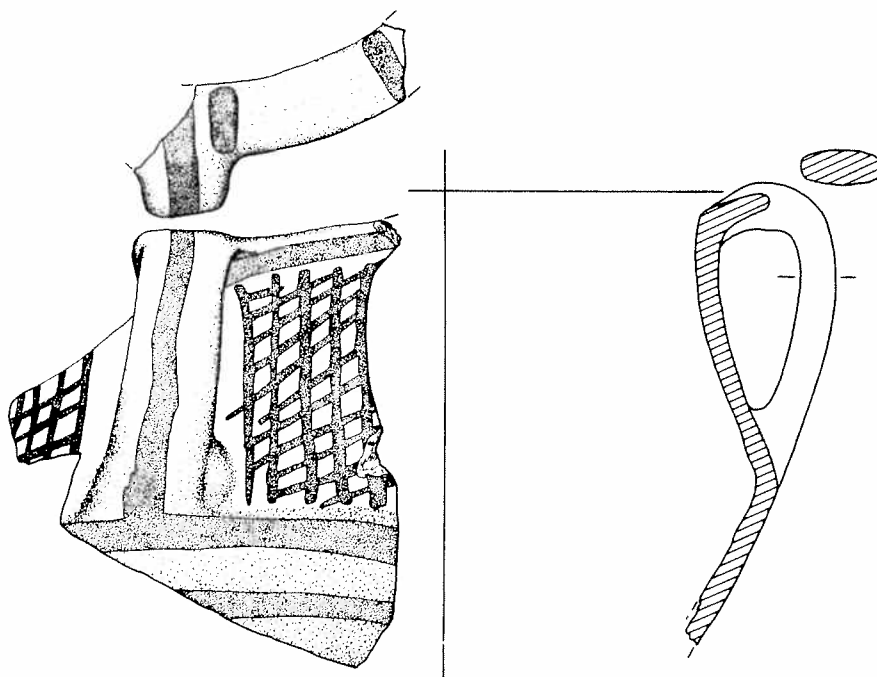


Fig. 5 Krater E9.790.60, from the same context as the seal.

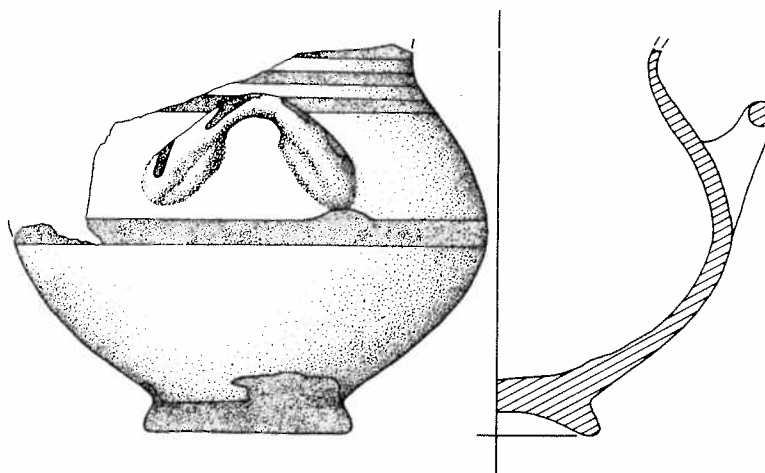


Fig. 6 Amphoriskos E9.74.3+790.63, from the same context as the seal.

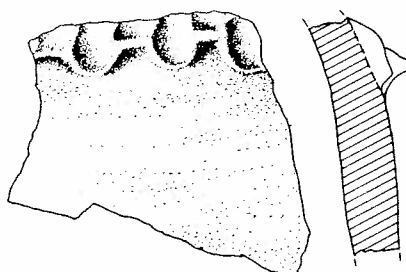


Fig. 7 Barbarian Ware E9.570.18, from the same context as the seal.

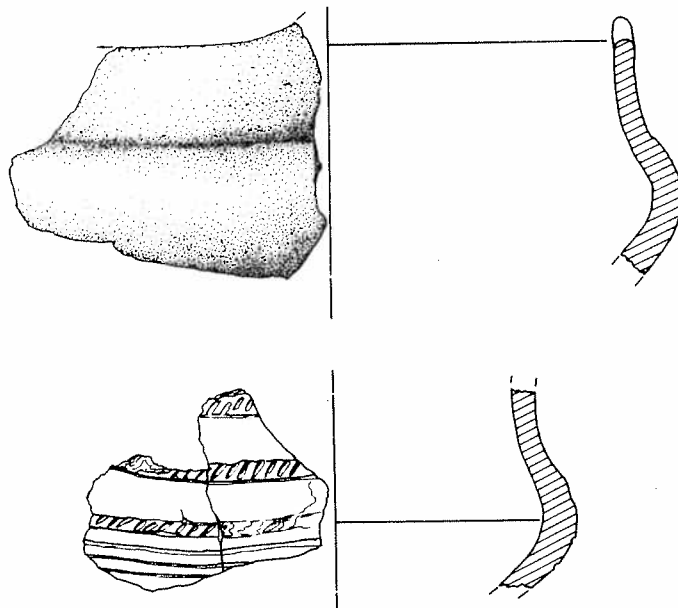


Fig. 8 Buckelkeramik E9.574.6 and E9.70.45+59, from the same context as the seal.



Fig. 9 View of the west face of Wall 95/3 showing orthostats attributable to the phase regarded by Blegen as VIIb<sub>1</sub>. Dia Troia 21.113.



taste, could also be called early VIIb<sub>2</sub>. The calendar date of its deposition should be somewhere in the second half of the 12th century B.C.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Hawkins describes and discusses the seal; Easton describes its archaeological context. We are very grateful to Prof. Dr. Manfred Korfmann for the opportunity to present the information given here.
- <sup>2</sup> Gorny 1993, 191.
- <sup>3</sup> The seal is registered as E9 Beh. 573. Dm 2.1 cm, thick 1.4 cm, weight 11.2 g. Çanakkale Museum. The coordinates of the find-spot are x = 10635.55, y = 9296.95; these can easily be traced in Hueber and Riorden 1994, Planbeilage 1. The altitude of the find-spot was 34.46 m. In 1994 excavation of the area was supervised by Rüstem Aslan and Didem Birkalan; in 1995 it was supervised mainly by the author.
- <sup>4</sup> Hueber and Riorden 1994, Planbeilage 1.
- <sup>5</sup> Dörpfeld 1902, 161, 175 and Taf. III.
- <sup>6</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, figs. 322–323, Street 711 and 751.
- <sup>7</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 197–202 figs. 36, 323, 333–334.
- <sup>8</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 198.
- <sup>9</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 143 fig. 333.
- <sup>10</sup> The contents of E9 Beh. 570, 574, 761, 779, 790 are taken into account here. The pottery was evaluated by Eva Rosenstock and Florian Ruppenstein. The following remarks draw on their comments and especially on notes generously supplied by Florian Ruppenstein.
- <sup>11</sup> E9 Beh. 790.60.
- <sup>12</sup> E9 Beh. 74.3 and 790.63.
- <sup>13</sup> Mee 1978, 147.
- <sup>14</sup> In E9 Beh. 570, 574, 779, 790.
- <sup>15</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 158.
- <sup>16</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 143 and 158.
- <sup>17</sup> Blegen at one point noted the existence of a building-phase later than his VIIb<sub>2</sub>, but regarded it as a sub-phase: Blegen et al. 1958, 233–234 figs. 356 and 359. He also observed possible rebuildings within VIIb<sub>2</sub> in Houses 768 and 791 (Blegen et al. 1958, 204–205 and 242). Schmidt noticed the existence of the “Circled Ware” (Dörpfeld 1902, 297–300 – “VIg R-Gattung”) but thought its introduction contemporary with that of Buckelkeramik and Barbarian ware, regarding them all as characteristic of his VII<sub>2</sub>. Hertel has also discussed this material, perceptively arguing that it follows immediately after VIIb<sub>2</sub> but ignoring its association with Buckel-

keramik and proposing it as a first indication of the Greek colonisation of VIII (Hertel 1991 and 1992). Excavation-results to date in fact suggest a significant decrease in population after VIIb<sub>3</sub>.

<sup>18</sup> E9 Beh. 574.6, 761.19, 790.45 + 54.

<sup>19</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 142–143.

<sup>20</sup> Dörpfeld 1902, 193–194.

<sup>21</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 139 n. 1; 142–143.

<sup>22</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 143. “The use of small orthostates that becomes characteristic and almost universal in the later phase [of Troia VIIb] is rare, if it occurs at all, in the initial stage.”

<sup>23</sup> Blegen et al. 1958, 197 (House 762); 201–202 (House 761); 233 (Area 789); figs. 281, 14–15; 283, 18; 285, 7–8. I am indebted to Florian Ruppenstein for drawing my attention to this.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- BLEGEN, CARL W. – CEDRIC G. BOULTER – JOHN L. CASKEY – MARION RAWSON. 1958. *Troy IV. Settlements VIIa, VIIb and VIII*. Princeton.
- DÖRPFELD, WILHELM. 1902. *Troja und Ilion. Ergebnisse der Ausgrabungen in den vorhistorischen und historischen Schichten von Ilion 1870–1894*. Athen.
- GORNY, RONALD L. 1993. The Biconvex Seals of Alişar Höyük, *Anatolian Studies* 43: 161–191.
- HERTEL, DIETER. 1991. Schliemanns These vom Fortleben Troias in den ‘Dark Ages’ im Lichte neuer Forschungsergebnisse, *Studia Troica* 1: 131–144.
- HERTEL, DIETER. 1992. Über die Vielschichtigkeit des Trojanischen Krieges. Zur Archäologie von Troia VI, VII und VIII, in: COBET, JUSTUS – BARBARA PATZEK (EDS.). *Archäologie und historische Erinnerung. Nach 100 Jahren Heinrich Schliemann*. 73–104. Essen.
- HUEBER, FRIEDMUND – ELIZABETH RIORDEN. 1994. Plan von Troia 1994 and Troia. Freiliegende Ruinen und Besucherwege 1994, *Studia Troica* 4: 115–120 with Planbeilagen.
- MEE, CHRISTOPHER. 1978. Aegean Trade and Settlement in Anatolia in the Second Millennium B.C., *Anatolian Studies* 28: 121–156.

Prof. Dr. J. David Hawkins  
School of Oriental and African Studies  
University of London  
GB London WC1H 0XG

Dr. Donald F. Easton  
12 Weltje Road  
GB London W6 9TG